



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: June 16, 2014
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of a new building on the site of the Martin Luther King Middle School, to contain a pre-kindergarten program, 1000 Mosby Street; UDC No. 2014-21**

I. APPLICANT

John Winter, DPW Special Capital Projects

II. LOCATION

1000 Mosby Street

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character and extent review of a new building containing a pre-kindergarten program on the site of the Martin Luther King Middle School.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This project involves the construction of a pre-kindergarten building adjacent to the new Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School at 1000 Mosby Street. The pre-K program was previously housed in the old middle school, but was moved when construction activities began. The new pre-K building will allow the City's Head Start and the Virginia Preschool Initiative program to return to the site where it is better able to serve the community.

The Urban Design Committee finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines, noting that the proposed building is architecturally consistent with the adjacent middle school. The Committee also finds that the proposal to locate the pre-K program on the school site is supportive of the Master Plan recommendation that the City should "promote the use of all existing and planned facilities by the community-at-large by sharing facilities". Lastly, the Committee finds that the final plans are consistent with the recommendations made by the UDC and Planning Commission during conceptual review. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval as submitted.

Staff Contact:

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject property, totaling 31.2 acres, is bound by the Leigh Street Viaduct/O Street on the south, Mosby Street on the east, Littlepage Street and Coalter Street on the north, and N. 18th Street on the west. The property lies within the R-53 (Multi-Family Residential) zoning district and is improved with Martin Luther

King Middle School, constructed in 1964. The site is also under construction for a new middle school to replace the existing one, with an expected opening date in early 2014.

The property is surrounded mainly by multi-family residential uses, including Mosby Court, with some single-family residential located across Littlepage Street, and industrial uses across Coalter Street.

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as a “public building” under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

In November 2013 the UDC reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the project conceptually, with the following conditions:

- That the final plans include a landscape plan, to show plant species, quantity, and size at the time of installation.
- That the final plans show the street trees along Mosby Street that were included in the plans for the middle school.
- That the applicant considers planting more trees on the slope to the west of the outdoor play area to provide shade to the play area while adding stability to the hillside.
- That the applicant considers incorporating a stormwater retention facility (perhaps a rain garden) into the final design.
- That the final plans show details on the fence to enclose the outdoor play area.
- That, prior to submittal for final review, the applicant provides evidence that Zoning Administration has reviewed the proposed plans for conformance with the applicable zoning regulations.

In 2011 the UDC reviewed and Planning Commission granted final approval of the new Martin Luther King Middle School building, which is currently under construction.

d. Project Description

This project involves the construction of a pre-kindergarten building adjacent to the new Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School at 1000 Mosby Street. The pre-K program was previously housed in the old middle school, but was moved when construction activities began. The new pre-K building will allow the City’s Head Start and the Virginia Preschool Initiative program to return to the site where it is better able to serve the community.

The pre-K building will be located between the middle school and the Leigh Street viaduct, and will be recessed significantly from the front of the middle school. Parking will be provided in the lot located to the south of the middle school, which has access from Mosby Street and from under the viaduct. A parking lot with a different configuration was approved at this location during review of the middle school. The newly configured lot will incorporate drop-off lanes in front of each building to be shared by the middle school and pre-K program. The peak drop-off time for the middle school is 8am, while the peak

drop-off time for the pre-K program will be at 9am. There are sidewalks through the site that connect to the sidewalk on Mosby Street.

The new pre-K building will be one story in height, with approximately 22,000 square feet of space to accommodate 260 students ages 3-5. The facility will include 13 classrooms, flexible common space learning areas, a multi-purpose room and associated administrative spaces. The building will be constructed of masonry and steel structural systems with a low slope roof. The exterior building materials feature a combination of ground face masonry units, brick, storefront glass and prefinished metal panels and are designed to match or complement the materials used in the new middle school. The pre-K building is being designed to achieve the LEED Silver Certification rating. Sustainability strategies that will be pursued include: storm water management; reflective roof surfaces to minimize heat gain; drought resistant and native plantings; energy efficient, high performing mechanical and electrical systems; and day lighting and views in regularly occupied spaces.

The pre-K building will include approximately 10,000 square feet of outdoor learning and play spaces. Play spaces will be designed to accommodate a combination of play equipment, hard surfaces, and open field area. Play areas will be located to the west of the pre-K building, and the entire play area will be fenced.

The mature trees along Mosby Street in front of the pre-kindergarten building will remain. The islands and perimeter of the new parking lot will be planted with 7 black gum trees and 11 willow oak trees. The pre-kindergarten building façade will be landscaped with primarily low-growing shrubs and perennials, in addition to 5 crape myrtle trees that will be planted in the spaces between the classrooms. A group of 7 arborvitae trees will be planted at the north edge of the building to provide screening to the play areas from the rest of the school site. Four littleleaf linden trees will provide shade to the playing area at the rear of the school.

Construction of the pre-K building is estimated to cost \$3,900,000, and is funded by the City. Construction is scheduled to begin in June of 2014 following Phase 4 of the MLK middle school project, which consists of the demolition of the remainder of the original school and final site improvements. The pre-K building is scheduled to be completed by August of 2015 with final occupancy slated for the fall semester of 2015.

e. Master Plan

The subject property is located within the East planning district as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Plan recommends Public and Open Space uses for this property, a designation that includes publicly owned and operated parks, open spaces, schools, and other government and public service facilities (page 135). The Public Facilities section of the Plan notes that “Richmond Public Schools has an ongoing policy of maximizing the use of facilities for both school and non-school related activities” (page 75). One of the “policies and strategies” intended to address specific school facilities deficiencies is “to enhance learning environments for all students, and to promote the use of all existing and planned facilities by the community-at-large by sharing facilities wherever practical and

economically advantageous among public schools and other community institutions, organizations, programs and City agencies” (page 77). The “policies and strategies” section solidifies this desire by stating support for “designing buildings to allow for maximum flexibility in the use of the space, and multiple-use facilities that accommodate both students and residents of the surrounding neighborhoods” (page 77).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines have a number of recommendations pertaining to new building construction, including that “the height of a new building should be compatible with neighboring buildings” and that “a building’s roof form should relate to neighboring buildings” (page 16). The Guidelines go on to say that “new building materials should be compatible with and complement adjacent buildings” and also that they “should be aesthetically and structurally durable, of high quality, and require little maintenance” (page 17). The Guidelines note that “the number, size, style and type of windows should be appropriate for the architecture of the building” and that “the rhythm, patterns, and ratio of walls to windows should be proportional and be compatible with adjacent buildings” (page 18).

As to site layout, the Guidelines advocate for parking area being “relegated to remote areas of the site so that the orientation of buildings can be given a direct connection to the public right-of-way” (page 4). “Circulation within the site”, the Guidelines note, “should be geared toward pedestrian movements, not vehicular” (page 14). The Guidelines also encourage landscaped islands in the parking areas with well maintained shade trees to soften large paved parking areas and break large expanses of asphalt (page 4). The Guidelines also call for screening the parking areas from the public right-of-way and neighboring properties. They note that “appropriate screening may include landscaping, walls, fences or berms” (page 5).

The Guidelines call for site landscaping to soften new construction and building architecture, and notes that “landscape plans should include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings” (page 10). The Guidelines further state that “shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting” (page 10). The Guidelines also advocate for Low Impact Development, the goal of which is to mimic a site’s predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source (page 11).

VI. ATTACHMENTS

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**